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CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE SOURCES FOR WESTERN HISTORY

In the year 1806 Thomas Ashe, an Englishman by birth and a traveler by profession, visited America for the purpose of making the grand tour, so popular a century ago, of the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers. Two years later his *Travels*, a work in three small volumes, appeared from the press of a London publisher.[1] For it, the unknown author of the preface modestly claims merits akin to those possessed by the narratives of Cook, Park, and others. For the first time a satisfactory account of a hitherto little known and much misrepresented part of America is presented. "With all the necessary acquirements," the author went on the journey for the sole purpose of examining the country; and his letters, exposing the delusions fostered by fanciful or partial writers, cannot fail to interest and inform politician and statesman, philosopher and antiquary.

Thus much from Ashe's *Travels*. Wrote Christian Schultz in the introduction to his own *Travels*, published in 1810: "The author will not conceal that an additional motive for consenting to the publication of these letters was the perusal of a volume lately published, entitled 'Travels in America, by Thomas Ash, Esq.,' purporting to be a part of the same route which he has travelled. From a careful examination of this work, which is found to abound in *mistakes, misrepresentations*, and fictions,

[1] Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America, Performed in 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of their Banks and Vicinity* (London, 1808).

pp. 167-488 reprinted by Kraus Reprint Corporation.

in almost every page, the author does not hesitate to declare, that in his opinion the *whole* is a *compilation*, taken principally from 'The Pittsburgh Navigator,' [2] nor does he believe that any such person ever travelled the route pretended to be described.''

That there was some reason for the charge brought by Schultz against his supposed fellow-traveler through the West, is apparent from even a cursory comparison of Ashe's *Travels* with *The Navigator*. Whether the sweeping character of the accusation is justified is aside from my present purpose to inquire. The subject is mentioned merely to introduce my theme, far from novel, yet in practice too frequently neglected, even by serious historical workers. Much creditable work has, of course, been done in the field of western history, both by individual workers and by state and local historical societies; but the establishment of civilization in this region is still too recent, an informed public interest in historical matters is still too uncommon, to secure the maintenance of satisfactory standards in the historical field. Unauthenticated tradition still plays too large a part in the secondary narratives, which are subjected only too rarely to the acid test of scientific examination in the light of contemporary sources.

These remarks find suitable illustration in the case of the wealthiest and most populous of the states of the Old Northwest. Chicago, the fifth metropolis of the world, still numbers among its residents one who can converse in Potawatomi, and recall the days of old Fort Dearborn and the Black Hawk War.[3] Around its beginnings has gathered a store of traditions but little less abundant and fabulous than those pertaining to the youthful George Washington, or the career of valiant Captain John Smith. But while these last have been tested in the crucible of expert historical criticism, those pertaining to early Chicago still pass unchallenged by historians, and under the guise of veritable history are being indelibly stamped upon the recep-

[2] ''The author,'' runs a footnote inserted at this point, ''among other falsities, informs us he understood, while at Pittsburgh, that a work was preparing for the press, called the 'Pittsburgh Navigator.' The truth is, that little work had been published nearly two years; and the writer of 'Ash's Travels' must have been in possession of a copy, as the whole is found interspersed through his work, *verbatim et literatim*.''

[3] The allusion is to Mrs. Emily Le Beau, daughter of Mark Beaubien.

tive minds of children in the schools. It may fairly be questioned whether the state as a whole has received more satisfactory treatment at the hands of the secondary historians than has its metropolis; and it may be affirmed with confidence that no adequate history of Illinois has yet been published.

My present interest, however, concerns the sources for western history, rather than the secondary narratives. The worker in the field of medieval history meets with certain problems in connection with the evaluation of his sources from which the student of American history is happily free. Yet the latter escapes no more than the former the necessity of critical evaluation. Unceasing vigilance in the scanning of his materials is requisite for the attainment of even approximate truth.

These general propositions may be illustrated by the consideration of one or two concrete examples. The historical repute of no other work has fluctuated more, perhaps, than the *Travels* of Jonathan Carver. First published in 1778, the work long enjoyed an international reputation, its popularity being attested by the appearance of edition after edition in the English, French, German, and Dutch languages.[4] The sneering question of Sidney Smith, "Who reads an American book?" might well have been answered by a reference to the career of Carver's *Travels*. Its popularity was due in part to its literary qualities. Entirely aside from these, however, Carver's account of the upper portion of the great valley and its people appealed to the serious-minded; above all the not unpleasing picture drawn by Carver of the social state of the red man was well calculated to captivate the jaded literary appetite of pre-revolutionary Europe, steeped as it was in the teachings of the return to nature doctrine of the French reformers.

For the geographer and the historian Carver's work possessed an abiding interest, due to the fact that its author was one of the earliest of English travelers to explore the region west of the Great Lakes, and the upper Mississippi Valley. Notwithstanding its general repute, its accuracy was soon called in question by scholars. As early as 1792 a correspondent of Jedidiah

[4] E. G. Bourne, "Travels of Jonathan Carver," in *American Historical Review*, 11:287. John T. Lee has listed nearly thirty editions of the *Travels*. Wisconsin Historical Society, *Proceedings*. 1909, pp. 155 *et seq.*; and *ibid.*, 1912, pp. 121 *et seq.*

Morse, the "father of American geography," warned him, "for the future reputation of your book," not to rely on Carver's work, and expressed the suspicion that it was a mere compilation from other books and reports.[5] Thirty-one years later Henry R. Schoolcraft, who had examined Carver's work while holding in contemplation an exploration of the region it describes, recorded in his *Journal* a similar opinion.[6] It should be noted in this connection that Schoolcraft credits Carver with visiting the chief portions of the country described and keeping a journal of his travels, but advances the theory that the second part of the *Travels* was compiled by some literary hack, to meet the exigencies of the booksellers.

Many years elapsed before the publication of Schoolcraft's opinion, but in the very year it was recorded in his *Journal* William H. Keating, the editor of the narrative of Major Long's expedition to the source of the St. Peter's River in 1823, was forging an attack upon Carver designed to blast forever the reputation of his *Travels*. Keating's narrative was published at Philadelphia in 1824,[7] and a second edition appeared in London the following year. The author is consistently hostile to Carver, making light of his honesty, and the accuracy of his reputed observations. Since Keating was a professor in the University of Pennsylvania, and the expedition had been sent out under the auspices of the United States government, any study of the validity of Carver's *Travels* must reckon with his charges.

They were reinforced by Robert Greenhow's *History of Oregon*, which appeared two decades later.[8] These various attacks upon Carver's work seem not to have attracted any considerable attention, however, and the learned author of the *Literary History of the American Revolution*, written toward the close of the nineteenth century, found only words of warmest praise for the work. Eight years ago, the repute of Carver as an authority on

[5] Bourne, "Travels of Jonathan Carver," in *American Historical Review*, 11:291, 292.

[6] *Ibid.*, 293.

[7] W. H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River . . . 1823 . . . under the Command of Stephen H. Long, U. S. T. E.; Compiled from the Notes of Major Long, Messrs. Say, Keating and Calhoun* (Philadelphia, 1824).

[8] Bourne, "Travels of Jonathan Carver," in *American Historical Review*, 11:292.

the Indian tribes, and as a source for northwestern history, underwent a pronounced decline. This was occasioned by the publication by Professor E. G. Bourne of a critical study of the *Travels* which gathered together the random criticisms of a century and reinforced them by a liberal resort to quotations.[9] With one exception, to be noted presently, Bourne made no contribution of his own to the discussion. He did, however, amply demonstrate the truth of Schoolcraft's charge that Carver's description of the Indian tribes is a mere compilation from other works.

As usual when a reaction sets in, the rebound of scholarly opinion went too far. To the too high estimate of Carver which had prevailed hitherto, succeeded a condemnation too sweeping. More recently a defender has appeared, in the person of John T. Lee, who by the publication of his quiet investigations has done much to demonstrate the invalidity of Professor Bourne's criticism of Carver, and the injustice of the sweeping condemnation of his *Travels*. Without in any way minimizing the value of Mr. Lee's investigations, I wish to summarize the results of an independent analysis of Professor Bourne's study, which tends to a similar conclusion.[10]

Aside from the introduction, Carver's *Travels* is composed of two distinct sections: a narrative journal of the author's supposed travels; and a treatise, approximately twice as long, on the Indian tribes. Much the greater portion of Bourne's critical study is devoted to demonstrating that instead of Carver being the real author of the treatise, it is a compilation from other and well-known sources.

Recognizing this, let us traverse the critic's argument concerning the first part of the *Travels*, the narrative journal of the author's explorations. If this is in fact an authentic journal of travels actually made by Carver, it will continue to possess importance as an historical source, notwithstanding the destructive criticism of the treatise on the Indian tribes. In developing this briefer portion of his study, Professor Bourne committed

[9] Bourne, "Travels of Jonathan Carver," in *American Historical Review*, 11:292.

[10] For the fuller study, of which only a sketch is presented here, see abstract of testimony in case of *United States of America vs. Economy Light and Power Company* (Chicago, 1912), 2: *passim*.

an error so serious as to vitiate all the conclusions drawn from it. Disqualifying himself from passing judgment on this portion of the book, on the ground that to do so "first-hand intimate knowledge of the field of observation" is requisite, he continues: "This qualification William H. Keating, the scholarly and painstaking geologist and historian of Long's expedition to the source of St. Peter's River in 1823, possessed in a high degree. The members of Long's expedition naturally gave Carver's account a more critical scrutiny under more favorable conditions than has been the case or is likely to be in the future. Their general judgment is unfavorable. In general it is remarked: 'No gentleman of the party would be willing to ascribe to Carver a scrupulous adherence to truth, (personal observation having convinced them all of the many misrepresentations contained in his work).'"

Further quotations from Keating, condemnatory of Carver, follow. The force of Professor Bourne's argument depends, obviously, upon two considerations: was Keating in fact sufficiently "scholarly and painstaking" to justify the critic's unhesitating faith in him; and did the members of Long's expedition give Carver's account "a more critical scrutiny under more favorable conditions than has been the case since"? An affirmative answer cannot, I think, be given to either question.

That Keating's work possesses merit I have no purpose to deny. That the author's observations are free from error a single illustration will suffice to disprove. Long's party passed through Chicago in June 1823. In describing the place Keating vigorously condemns Henry R. Schoolcraft's recently published estimate of Chicago, based on observations made three years earlier.[11] Instead of the fertile soil and serene summer climate reported by Schoolcraft, Keating finds it impossible for the garrison to subsist on the grain raised in the country; various defects of soil and climate are cited to account for this; among others, "the maize seldom has time to ripen, owing to the shortness and coldness of the season." It is, perhaps, a sufficient commentary on this account of the soil and climate of the vicinity of Chicago to call attention to its "maize" producing reputation in recent years. Nor can it be urged that the climatic con-

[11] Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 164, 165.

ditions have changed since 1823, the time of Long's visit; there is sufficient evidence to show that from the first establishment of Fort Dearborn the inmates of the little settlement raised corn, fruit, and garden vegetables. Only two years before Keating's visit, indeed, Alexander Wolcott, the Indian agent, raised from six acres of corn "370 measured bushels — more than sixty bushels to the acre." [12]

While this illustration throws no direct light upon Carver's *Travels* it has an obvious bearing on the question of the trustworthiness of Keating's observations. Contrary to Professor Bourne's assumption, Carver's narrative has been scrutinized by other explorers as well qualified, apparently, to pass judgment upon it as were those who accompanied Major Long, and under equally favorable conditions. In 1835 G. W. Featherstonhaugh followed in the track of Carver across Wisconsin to the Mississippi, and thence up that stream and the St. Peter's River.[13] Like Keating, Featherstonhaugh was a geologist, engaged in an official reconnoissance on behalf of the federal government. The mere historian may well refrain from attempting to pass upon the relative merits of the two geologists; [14] yet he may presume to point out that their reports were made under precisely similar auspices, and the observations of Featherstonhaugh possess the same *a priori* claim upon the confidence of the historian that Bourne mistakenly ascribes to Keating alone. In one respect Featherstonhaugh possesses a superior claim

[12] Letter of Wolcott, November, 1820, printed in J. Moses and J. Kirkland, *History of Chicago* (Chicago, 1895), 1:39.

[13] For Featherstonhaugh's reports see *Report of a Geological Reconnoissance made in 1835*, 24 Congress, 1 Session, Senate Document 333; and G. W. Featherstonhaugh, *A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotor* (London, 1847).

[14] Keating, it should be noted, was a chemist rather than a geologist. At the time of Long's expedition he was in his twenty-fourth year. The editing of the report of Long's expedition is his one considerable contribution to geological literature, and this, according to Merrill, contains "little or nothing along the broad lines of geology." (*Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution . . . for the Year Ending June 30, 1904. Report of the U. S. National Museum* [Washington, 1906], 274.) Featherstonhaugh, on the other hand, has many titles to his credit. He has been sharply criticised by some contemporary American geologists. He seems to have been highly regarded by some of the great English geologists of his time, and the estimate of Merrill is, on the whole, a favorable one. On the subject of this note see *ibid.*, 274-276, 301-303; James Hall and J. D. Whitney, *Report on the Geological Survey of the State of Wisconsin* ([Madison] 1862), 1:79, 80; E. Coues, *Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike* (New York, 1895), *passim.*

even, for he carried with him copies of both Carver and Keating, and continually checked the two reports by his own observations as he went along. The result of the comparison thus made is succinctly stated by the explorer himself in a contemporary letter to Schoolcraft: "I found Mr. Keating's account of the Mississippi, and especially of the St. Peter's, most surprisingly erroneous, and old Jonathan Carver's book, which he is constantly denouncing, very accurate." [15]

The foregoing does not suffice to establish the credibility of Carver's *Travels*; it does, I apprehend, demonstrate the unsoundness of Bourne's criticism of the portion of Carver's work under consideration. But further light on the contentions of Featherstonhaugh and Keating with respect to Carver is not lacking. No more minute and careful commentary on an American exploring expedition has been made, perhaps, than that of Elliott Coues on the expedition of Zebulon M. Pike. In it Coues traverses the same ground gone over by Carver, Keating, and Featherstonhaugh. He traverses, also, the matter of Keating's charges against Carver, with the result that Carver's good faith and veracity are stoutly upheld. Concerning Keating's declaration, quoted with approval by Professor Bourne, that none of Long's party credited the veracity of Carver, Coues remarks: "If this is meant to charge Carver with wilful misrepresentations, I think it is unjust as well as ungenerous. . . . Carver made mistakes, like the rest of us; he was often loose about distances, dimensions, and such things; he believed more things that were told him than a less honest and more wary wayfarer would have taken to be true; but I think he drew a short bow for so long a journey, had no occasion to deceive anyone but himself, and always intended to tell the truth as it seemed to him — in short I do not see how his good faith can be seriously questioned. I accept Carver's statements, as I do those of Pike, Long, and other honest persons, for what they may prove to be worth." [16]

The theory of Coues as to Carver's credulity receives support from an unexpected quarter. In 1868 a manuscript was rescued

[15] H. R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* (Philadelphia, 1851), 524, 525.

[16] Coues, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, 1:59 *et seq.*, and n. 60.

from the waste paper of a New England kitchen. It proved to be the journal of Peter Pond, a Connecticut Yankee who in mature life engaged in the northwestern fur trade. Largely because of its orthographic oddities Pond's journal was published in the *Connecticut Magazine*, whereupon its value as a source for northwestern history was recognized.[17] Pond followed along the Fox-Wisconsin route only a few years after Carver had traversed it. He relates that Carver could not understand "french or Indian" and was imposed on by his interpreter and others. "He Gave a Good aCount of the Small Part of the Western Countrey he saw But when he a Leudes to Hearsase he flies from facts in two Maney Instances."[18]

In view of all the evidence it seems likely that students of the subject will in future agree with Coues that the good faith of Carver is not open to question, and that his statements, like those of "other honest persons," are to be accepted for what they may prove to be worth. So favorable a judgment cannot be passed, however, upon the journal of another western traveler, who, unlike Carver, has hitherto escaped the critical attention of historians. I allude to George W. Ogden's *Letters from the West*, a small volume first published at New Bedford, in 1823.[19] Ogden purports to have been a Quaker merchant of New Bedford who early in 1821 set out on a business journey to the western country, where he remained two years. He reached Pittsburgh in April, 1821, and the first three of his letters contain observations upon that place, and upon the Ohio River journey thence to the Mississippi. Six more letters on the western country complete the volume.

For nearly a century the real character of Ogden and his *Letters* has escaped the attention of students of western history. Although the work is slight in itself, and never acquired, apparently, any widespread popularity, it has passed muster as a journal of veritable observation made in the western country in the third decade of the nineteenth century, and it was deemed of sufficient importance to merit reprinting in the series of *Early Western Travels*, edited by the late Dr. Thwaites.[20] Prior to

[17] The journal was reprinted in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 18:314 *et seq.*

[18] *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 18:334.

[19] George W. Ogden, *Letters from the West* (New Bedford, 1823).

[20] Reprinted in Thwaites, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland, 1904-1907), 19.

this, at least one scholar had noticed that portions of Ogden's *Letters* were taken from other works,[21] and Dr. Thwaites himself points out that the personal narrative of Ogden is comprised in the first three letters, the remaining portion of the work being a geographical and historical compendium somewhat hastily constructed.[22]

Notwithstanding this, it may safely be affirmed that the true character of the work has not hitherto been comprehended. The good Quaker merchant, who manifests so humane and lively an abhorrence of slavery and warfare, appropriated in most unquakerlike fashion, the literary property of others, with the intent to deceive his readers. With the exception of a very few passages for which credit is given, the greater portion of the volume has been plagiarized from other writers. Nor is it easy to say whether the cleverness of the plagiarizer or his boldness is the more surprising. The pilfered gleanings from three or four different works are sometimes interwoven to make up a single page. With Schultz's denunciation of Ashe as a "closet traveler," before him,[23] Ogden not only followed Ashe's example, but even improved upon it. Nor did he resort for his spoil to works published at some distance of time or space. A large part of his letters is taken from such well-known books as Evans's *Tour*, Harding's *Tour*, Harris's *Tour*, Stoddard's *Louisiana*, and Drake's *Cincinnati*, all but one of which were published within a decade, several of them in Ogden's own New England.[24] That Ogden did not actually make a western tour is

[21] A. C. Boggess, *The Settlement of Illinois, 1778-1830* (Chicago, 1908), 131, n. 1, calls attention to Ogden's indebtedness to Harding for a particular passage there quoted.

[22] Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, 19:11. I am unaware of the editor's reason for limiting Ogden's personal narrative to the first three letters. In the perusal of the letters themselves no such distinction is evident.

[23] Pages 92-96 of Ogden are taken from Schultz, *Travels on an Inland Voyage . . . in the Years 1807 and 1808* (New York, 1810), 1:148-151, 153, 154.

[24] I have identified the following sources from which longer or shorter portions of the *Letters* were taken: Benjamin Harding, *A Tour through the Western Country, A. D. 1818 & 1819* (New London, 1819); Major Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 1812); Estwick Evans, *Pedestrious Tour . . . through the Western States and Territories* (Concord, 1819); Daniel Drake, *Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country* (Cincinnati, 1815); T. M. Harris, *Journal of a Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains* (Boston, 1805); Andrew Miller, *New States and Territories* (Keene, New Hampshire, 1819); Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia.*

not, perhaps, susceptible of proof; but it is certain that most of his reputed observations were made by other men, and that in the production both of the first three letters and of the remainder of the work he wielded scissors and paste-pot far more diligently than he did the pen.

The volume consists, aside from a one-page preface and a somewhat shorter final note, of nine letters comprising some one hundred and twenty-one pages. The preface represents that the author, having traveled much in the West, is induced to believe it would be no small benefit to his countrymen to give a general descriptive view of it. The greater part of the letters were originally written to a brother, "without the most distant view to their publication." "They were generally written in haste, and have gone through very little, and some of them no alterations, from the originals."

The latter statement contains more of truth than the writer intended to convey. Some of the letters have in very truth "gone through very little alteration from the originals" — but the originals were not written by Ogden.[25] The work of plagiarization begins with the first paragraph of the preface, which is based in spirit, and in part in essence, on the single-paragraph introduction to Harding's *Tour*. Passing from the preface to the letters themselves, the author, after an introductory paragraph, plunges at once into his narrative with an account of the city of Pittsburgh, to which the whole of Letter I is devoted. Comparison with the second paragraph of Harding reveals that he resumes here the practice begun in the preface of appropriating the literary property of others.

Ogden, page 6	Harding, page 3
I have now arrived at Pittsburgh, a pleasant and flourishing town, where the Alleghany from the north and the Monongahela from the East, unite and form the beautiful river Ohio, one of the handsomest streams of water in the known	At the head of the Ohio,* one of the handsomest streams of water in the known world, as allowed by all travellers, both American and European, where the Alleghany from the north

* A name given it by the natives, signifying "beauty."

[25] All of Letter IV, for example, is taken, with a few trifling verbal changes, from Stoddard's *Louisiana*.

world, as allowed by all travellers, both European and American. . . . In this place there is scarce any mechanical art but what is carried on to the greatest perfection.

and the Monongahela from the East, form a junction, stands the flourishing town of Pittsburg. At this place there is scarce any mechanical art but what is carried on in its greatest perfection.

From this promising beginning the author continues to plagiarize throughout the letter. Of its 162 lines, aside from the introductory paragraph, 135 were taken from Harding and Evans. For the statement, "Fort Pitt occupies the site of the old Fort DuQuesne," Ogden's obligation to Harris is ostentatiously acknowledged; yet there is nothing to show that approximately five-sixths of the entire letter is also taken from this source and from the *Tour* of Estwick Evans.

Ogden's description of Pittsburgh is concluded in the first letter. The second contains his account of the river trip to Cincinnati, together with a description of that town. If this journey was not in fact confined to the author's library, at least the major portion of his description of it was derived from that source. The letter contains eight pages; five and one-half have been taken, usually with slight modification, from the works of Harding, Evans, Harris, and Miller. For page 13, containing thirty-two lines in all, Ogden drew upon Evans, Harding, and Miller. All of page 16 is copied from Harris, except for the first five lines, which Harding contributes. All of page 18 and part of page 19 are from Evans.[26] The remainder of page 19 and most of page 20 are taken from Miller's pamphlet. For the remainder of page 20 Ogden again levied upon Evans.

The editor of the *Early Western Travels* comments on the New England Quaker predisposition with which Ogden wrote, calling special attention to the eastern prejudice manifested in his picture of the Virginia backwoodsmen.[27] The prejudice is undeniably present; but that it is the prejudice of Thaddeus Mason Harris, rather than of Ogden the Quaker, the following extracts sufficiently show.

[26] The passage from Evans is somewhat expanded by Ogden.

[27] Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, 19:12.

Ogden, pages 16, 17

I had often heard a degraded character of the settlers of the western part of Virginia, and I had now opportunity of seeing it verified. The great abundance of wild game allures them to the forest; and from it they obtain the greater part of their miserable subsistence. In consequence of this, they neglect the cultivation of their lands; their buildings go to decay, their fences generally made of brush are levelled to the earth by the passing wind, and are never rebuilt, unless imperious necessity requires it. They acquire rough and savage manners, they have no learning, no settled principles of religion, and, in fine, are not far removed, in point of civilization, from the savages of our western borders!

Harris, page 59

I had often heard a degraded character of the *Back Settlers;* and had now an opportunity of seeing it exhibited. The abundance of wild game allures them to be huntsmen. They not only find sport in this pursuit, but supply of provisions, together with considerable profit from the peltry. They neglect, of course, the cultivation of the land. They acquire rough and savage manners. Sloth and independence are prominent traits in their character; to indulge the former is their principal enjoyment and to protect the latter their chief ambition.

Unless Ogden himself wrote a larger part of his third letter than of the two preceding ones, I have been less successful in identifying the sources upon which he drew. Of a total number of 322 lines in the letter, I have traced 146, slightly less than half, to other works.[28] A somewhat close calculation concerning the authorship of the first three letters shows that fifteen and one-half pages out of a total of twenty-five, or something more than sixty per cent, were taken from other works, then recently published. Yet credit is given for but a scant half dozen lines.

[28] Five lines Ogden acknowledges to be drawn from "an illustrious writer." The description is scarcely correct, since they are taken, in common with a large portion of the *Letters,* from Evans' *Tour,* yet the acknowledgment relieves the author from any imputation of plagiarism to the extent of the lines in question.

In noticing the remaining letters, no attempt will be made to present a comprehensive analysis; rather, a few examples, chosen somewhat at random, will be offered, by way of illustrating Ogden's epistolary methods. The quixotic Evans sometimes indulged in rhapsodies, more or less diverting, on philosophical and other subjects. Ogden, too, occasionally indulged in the same habit, and the results of the cogitations of the two men are at times strikingly similar. Concluding an account of the battle of Tippecanoe, Evans writes: "Near the head waters of the Wabash some of the Kickapoos are settled; and here too the Shawanese have some of their hunting grounds. This last idea suggests the subject of Zoology. . . ." Why it should, passes the present writer's comprehension. The task of explaining the working of the law of association involved must be left to the psychologist; but the historian may safely conclude, upon finding Evans's rambling and incoherent monologue on the subject reprinted by Ogden as his own, that the latter borrowed his meditations from the former. For the sake of brevity a portion only of the passage is appended:

Evans, pages 182, 183

The whole creation presents to the human mind the most engaging subjects of contemplation; — subjects which speak to his heart, and eloquently persuade him to love and adore his Heavenly Father. The Scriptures derive from this source moral and religious illustrations, which are truly impressive; in the 80th Psalm the Deity speaks of his chosen people under the similitude of a vine brought out of Egypt; and on account of transgression, "The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beasts of the field doth devour it!" David, in representing the happi-

Ogden, page 70

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ness, security, and comfort of a Christian spirit, exclaims, "the sparrow hath found an house and the swallow a nest for herself; — even thine altars, O Lord of hosts!"

ness, security, and comfort of a christian spirit, exclaims, the sparrow has found a house and the swallow a nest for herself; even thine altars, O Lord of hosts!

Evans further undertook to describe the opossum, this animal's peculiarities having aroused his interest. He gives, as the source of his information, "an intelligent farmer" of Indiana. It will be seen from the following extracts that Ogden, too, conversed with an Indiana farmer, of apparently equal intelligence:

Evans, pages 183, 184

It is well known that the opossum, at its birth, is remarkably small; but the account which I received from an intelligent farmer of Indiana, in relation to this particular, is almost incredible. This account, however, seems to be supported, analogically by the testimony of naturalists. The young of the marmose, a species of opossum, is, when first born, not larger than a bean. This animal has two longitudinal folds of skin, near the thigh, in which her young are comfortably kept until they acquire strength enough to take care of themselves.

Ogden, page 71

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At times in his plagiarizing Ogden is careful to bring the extracts copied down to date. Frequently, however, he is indifferent to, if not ignorant of, developments which had occurred subsequent to the publication of the work copied. A good illustration of both these points is afforded by the opening lines of Letter v, devoted to Illinois. "The State of Illinois," writes Ogden, "lies west of Indiana, and was formerly included in it. . . .

Its latitude on the north is the same as that of Ohio and Indiana, forty-one degrees fifty minutes." This passage is copied from the section of Miller's pamphlet headed "Illinois Territory." Miller wrote in 1818, the same year as the admission of Illinois to statehood. Ogden, writing in 1823, makes the change in Miller's statements necessitated by the altered political status of Illinois, but, ignorant of the change made in its northern boundary by the enabling act of 1818, copies without change Miller's statement that this boundary is the same as that of Ohio and Indiana.

That errors should be committed in the course of so much copying is not strange. It is some of these apparently trivial lapses, indeed, that afford the strongest presumption that Ogden never in fact made the pretended tour. The town of "Smithfield" at the mouth of the Cumberland River, to which he gives so malodorous a reputation, would scarcely have been misnamed had Ogden actually visited the place.[29] A more glaring error occurs in connection with the description of Illinois. Harding had described the prairies of Illinois,[30] and, in another place, the narrow strip of land along the Mississippi known as the American Bottom.[31] Ogden, thinking, evidently, that the two descriptions applied to the same region, copied them both,[32] with an addition of his own which renders it evident that he had not himself visited either region. "It is from the mouth of the Kaskaskia, to the mouth of Wood Creek, a distance of nearly one hundred miles, on the eastern shore of the Mississippi *that these prairie or American bottom lands* [33] are to be found." Proceeding, the author says this part of the state is generally known as the "St. Gamie country." The editor of the *Early Western Travels* suggests that he must have intended to say "St. Clair." [34] In fact he intended to copy Harding — and succeed-

[29] *Letters from the West*, 29. The actual name of the town was Smithland. The author copies this passage from Evans' *Tour*, 176.

[30] "This country possesses large and extensive savannas or prairies, so called, resembling large flat plains — here the traveler is struck with wonder and amazement — here he may, in many places, travel from the rising of the sun to its going down, without once having a hillock or tree presented to his eye — nothing but grass of a luxuriant growth, waving in the breeze." Harding, *Tour*, 8.

[31] *Ibid.*, 10, 11.

[32] *Letters*, 47-49.

[33] Not italicized in the original.

[34] Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, 19:58, n. 45.

ed in his intention, for Harding had made the same statement.[35] Another type of error incident to Ogden's methods of copying, proceeds from his custom of fitting the description copied to another place or situation than that to which its author originally applied it. In his picture of Cincinnati, Dr. Drake undertook to portray the state of society of that city.[36] Ogden copied the entire description in his letter on Ohio,[37] without any intimation to the reader that his description of the society of Ohio as a whole was intended by its real author to apply only to the metropolis of the state. In similar fashion, a single instance, given by Stoddard, of depravity on the part of a slaveholder of Louisiana, is made by Ogden to apply to southern slaveholders generally. The practical effect of this perversion of the original statement can readily be seen from the citation which follows:

Stoddard, page 340	Ogden, page 120
Louisiana presents at least one instance of melancholy depravity; the father disposed of several of his children as slaves, together with their mother.	The American slave states present at least one instance of awful depravity; the father disposes of his children as slaves, together with the mother.

Space forbids to describe the author's crowning achievement, that of changing a woman into a man.[38] That he continued his peculiar methods of literary composition to the end will sufficiently appear from the fact that the twelve concluding pages of the work, devoted to a discussion of slavery, and purporting to have been written by Ogden originally for the *New Bedford Gazette*[39] were in fact copied, with more or less accuracy, from Stoddard's *Louisiana*.[40] That Ogden's *Letters* is a work quite without merit, historical or otherwise, has been, I think, sufficiently demonstrated. The judgment passed in it concerning Father Hennepin,[41] may not unfairly be applied to Ogden him-

[35] *Tour*, 11.
[36] Drake, *Picture of Cincinnati*, 166-168.
[37] *Letters*, 96-99.
[38] Compare Harding, *Tour*, 10, and Ogden, *Letters*, 52.
[39] *Letters*, 126, concluding "note."
[40] Stoddard, *Louisiana*, 331-343.
[41] *Letters*, 38. This was really written, originally, by Stoddard.

self: "he has gained little credit in Canada; the name of honour they give him there is, — *the great liar*; he writes of what he saw in places *where he never was.*"

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